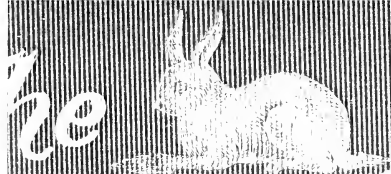


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The Rabbit Foot



Poems by
Byrd Mason

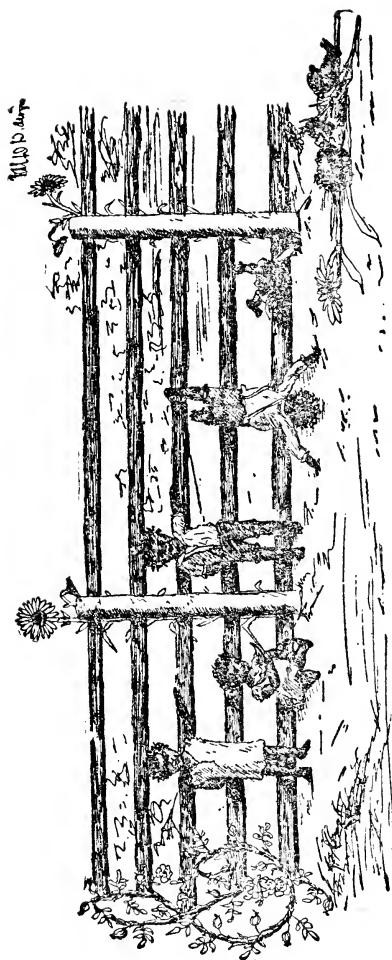


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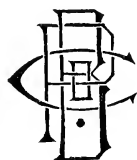
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Look a - way ! Win - ie Land!

The
Rabbit Foot

by
Byrd Mason



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BY

BYRD MASON

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To "Uncle Remus,"
As some slight recognition
Of the pleasure afforded my boys
By "Brer Rabbit."

A Day Too Late.

I met a friend not long ago,
From a far distant State,
Who had come to visit Virginia
With expectations great.

For she had heard so much of us,
In such romantic guise,
She thought the day had come at last
For dreams to realize.

She thought to find those same grand homes,
With gates spread open wide,
And all the adjuncts of the past
Aristocratic pride.

She thought to find a welcome free,
Guests coming by the score,
With compliments and toasts and jests,
With dance and feasts galore.

Centaurs and cavaliers the men,
Roses-in-bloom the maids,
Majestic age with silvery hair,
And friends of every grade.

The hospitality of those fine
Housekeepers of the past,
She should have known that fairy tale
Was but too bright to last.

She expected to drive with coach and six,
Outriders fore and aft,
But when she spoke of doing that same—
Why, all of us just laughed.

Those ancestral homes in ruins lie,
Of friends so true and tried,
Many are dead, the rest of them
Are scattered far and wide.

The belles and beauties of long ago
Have doffed their gracious airs,
Another sort usurps the place
They once considered theirs.

Only traditions of our past,
Survive just now and then,
While even those are dying out,
And disbelieved of men.

Those lowly friends whose merriment
Cheered night into the day,
No longer friends, but secret foes,
Somewhat to our dismay.

The little black who saved the steps,
Obedient as a child,
Has grown into the Caliban
Of Shakespeare's Tempest Isle.

Our hearts are just as warm perhaps,
But buffets of stern fate
Have changed our lives—I greatly fear
She came a day too late.

* * * * *

But ere these times are quite forgot,
I'll try by skill of mine,
To draw them as they used to be
In simple true outline.

The Rabbit Foot.

"I dun brung you er rabbit-foot, Miss Grace,
An' I hopes 'twill bring you luck,
Ef you ain't too high-fer-lut-in
Ter takes intrust in sech truck.

"I cotched him myself er week ergo,
At dat chuch-yard do' by night,
An' cut off his leff hine foot right straight,
Arfter er tuzzlin' fight."

"What sort of luck should I expect?
For just what you might call
Good luck, or bad, I mightn't think
Any sort of a luck at all.

"Dat's de trufe, yas'm, it sartinly so,
I moughtn't agree wid you;
Kase my bess of luck would princ'ply be
Jess nuthin' er tall to do.

"Cepp eatin' uv watermilyuns—
I had dun fergot dat fac—
Thanky, Miss Grace! (dat leff hine foot
Dun started 'pon hits track!")

Little Lucy.

They were all Episcopalians,
These darkeys at the Hall,
And congregated at the church
To christen children small.

The preacher stood arrayed in white,
In stiff and awesome state,
To pour the holy chrism o'er
Each little woolly pate.

"Name this child!" Kate catches breath,
She lisps: "Justh Luthy, thir,"
He stopt in fear and trembling,
For he thought it "Lucifer."

"I daren't baptize a Christian child
By such a name as that—"
And looked so fiercely at her,
That Kate, fluttering like a bat,

Whispered "Pleathe, thir, choothe yourthelf,
Tho' ther won't no harm be dun—"
"Well," said he, "what do you think
Of the name of—Washington?"

Then took the silence for consent,
Announced with solemn air,
“This child is named George Washington—”
And wondered at her stare.

The mother melted into tears,
And lifted up a wail
That smote the truth into his ears,
And made the preacher quail.

“Dar now! Dar now! What I’m gwine do
Wid dith poor leetle one,
De onlieth gal I got on yerth
Dun named George Wathington!”

Aunt Cindy's Portrait.

Miss say she warnt my pictur tuk,
Jess like I'm uvvery day—
I don want no pictur tuk of mine
Ef I got ter look dat way.

Er pritty sight me—ole checked-cote
An' hyar tied up wid strings,
An' jess all bundled up enyhow,
Who uvver heerd sech things!

Miss dunno what she talkin' 'bout,
Me—in my slip-shod shoe,
Wid nary bit uv bunnit on—
An' in er pictur, too!

I don't warnt folks ter 'member me
'Cepp drust up in my bess;
I don't cornsider it respects er tall
All floured up and messed.

I warnts my new manchiller on,
An' fan helt in my han';
'An' settin' down like sho-'nuff fokes,
De quality ov de lan'.

I hain't gwine ter hab no chillen ov mine
Er 'spisin' ov my looks,
Dat likeness got ter do me proud
Like de vittles what I cooks.

Miss ain't got nun ov hern dat way,
Hern's drust in velvits fine,
An' lessen I wars my Sund'y-bess,
She don' git nun ov mine.

Miss don' suspicion how I feels,
But 'ceppin' we ergree
'Bout dem Sund'y-go-ter-meetin' close—
No sar! No mam! No me!

Aunt Cindy's Pound Cake.

"That cake was most delicious,
Can't you tell me how it's made?"
"Why, certingly, Miss," most graciously
The courteous accents said.

"In cose, you takes plenty flour ernuff,
De size de cake you warnt,
An' den de aigs—jess ez you please—
Sum's little, an' sum aren't.

You graduates de shuger nex,
Wid er lump ov butter, too;
You beats de aigs—de yokes and whites—
Den beats de butter thru.

How big er lump ov butter, say?
Jess like I says it twuz,
I thought enybody knowed how big
Er lump ov butter wus.

An' den you beats—an' beats—an' beats,
Twell de dough gits reely warm,
An' you gits warm er beatin' it;
You carn't do it eny harm,

Kase de mo' you beats de better 'tis,
Fer er light-minded one;
Well, den you bakes an' bakes dat dough,
Twel it rises like de sun.

Dat's all de way—de way I duz,
Kase dat's de way ter bake,
An' you ain't nuvver set your toof
In eny better cake.

Huccum you don't understan' dat talk?
Why, dat one you jess eat
Was made dat way, an' you jess say
Dat cake, it carn't be beat."

"But I always thought a real pound-cake
Took just a pound around—"
"Laws! no chile! it's dat beatin'
What makes 'um call it pound."

**“Children Should be Seen and Not
Heard.”**

Mammy appears with bonnet tied,
And basket on her arm,
A look of mighty importance
On her usual visage calm—
For important looking persons
Mammy bears the palm.

A chorus of little voices:
“O! Mammy! Let me go!
I won’t be any trouble—I’ll do
Whatever you tell me to—”
“I carn’t let you go dis mornin’,
Dough I is sorry, sho’.

“But I mought bring you sumthin’ back,
Ef you ’have like chillen should;
Dough I carn’t tell you what it is,
It’s sumthin’ mighty good,
But er powerful secret, hunny,
Mammy’d tell you ef she could.”

“Why, where are you going, Mammy?”
Asks the boldest of the throng,

Re-echoed by the rest of us,
Although we know it's wrong;
But it's such a favor for Mammy
To take one of us along.

Then all of us stand quite abashed,
For we know what Mammy thinks,
When she straightens up and sets her mouth
As solemn as the Sphynx,
And wait in awestruck silence,
And even the boldest blinks.

Mammy can't "intolerate" questions,
And Mammy's black eyes shine,
She turns with a reproving look
And finished sarcasm fine:
"I'm gwine whar I'm gwine, dat's whar—
Now you know whar I'm er gwine."

Little Magnolia's Religion.

Always on the Sabbath-day
Somebody tries to preach or pray,
When the little darkeys come to say

Their share of Catechism lore,
A task by which they set much store,
Now set aside forevermore.

Little Magnolia comes with the rest,
In linsey-wolsey gaily drest,
And answers bravely with the best.

Little Magnolia's fat and brown,
While all alert from toe to crown,
Intimidated by a frown.

Little Magnolia always sings
Of golden streets with harps and strings,
And Jesus' love and angel wings.

Of the doctrine of eternal fires
She somewhat anxiously inquires,
It evidently awe inspires.

She listens with a mild surprise,
About that home beyond the skies;
Then little Magnolia "bats" her eyes,

And solemnly shakes her kinky head:
"I dunno what I do ef I be ded,
I jess es lief stay here instead—"

A tear-drop twinkles like a star:
"I suttinly don' want ter go nowhar,
Less I know Mammy gwine be thar."

Uncle Bumpass.

Ef I wus ter tell all dat I knows,
 'Twould raise er rumpuss sho';
I jess now passed erlong de hall
 An' cum by dat side do'.

You knows dey keeps de brandy on
 Dat sidebode in de hall;
Handy ter ax fokes fer ter drink
 When cump'ny cum ter call.

An' dar wus Uncle Bumpass,
 Es jess es bold es brass,
Er drinkin' frum de 'canter
 'Thout even techin' er glass.

Dat Bumpass sho' is spiled ter deff,
 An' always wus er limb;
I don' speck he kno' ef dat dar house
 B'long ter Miss, er him.

He seed me, an' jess humped his back,
 An' gin er leetle snigger;
"Dis her's Miss' lick'er you see gwine
 Inter yer Mistis' nigger."

An' Miss—she wond'rin' uvvery day,
Why dat licker don' hole out;
I don' see what she wunderin' at,
Ef she jess look erbout.

Ef I warnt feared uv Bumpass,
I'd er tole her long ergo;
But jess you wait—one day—ole Miss
Will cum by dat side do'."

Ole Rufe.

Ole Rufe was caught red-handed;
No excuse came to his brain,
"Kase tain't no use to splainify,
When things they won't stay splain.

Dat chicken runned right crost my parth,
Jess fryin'-size an' fat;
My hans jess reached out uv demselves
An' coteched him—simperly dat.

I got ter take what cums ter me,
Whatsumever de law erlow,
Kase I carn't ercount fer dat dar fowl—
I no-count nigger, enyhow."

The Sabbath Rest.

"I always likes ov Sundy morns
Ter knock off at my ease,
An' set out in de porch an' watch
De birds out in dem trees—
An'—Miss Kitty, I wish you'd ax yer Pa,
Ter len' me de paper, please."

"Which one?" "Jess eny one he's got,
It's all de same ter me,
I carn't read nare one, but I likes
Ter set whar fokes kin see;
An' I 'joys myseff er thinkin' how
I looks like ole Mars Lee."

He's a very respectable old man,
Of warm and chocolate brown,
All of his colored friends stop and speak,
On their errands through the town;
And he enjoys his papers much
As he holds them upside down.

A Penny for Your Thoughts.

“Miss gin Penny er long brown cloak
Dat recht plum ter her knees,
An’ jess es good es new, ’cept whar
Miss drapt er streak ov grease.

Long down on de frontispeace,
An’ in cose she culdn’t war,
So ’twus luck fer Penny—an’ er hat
Wid fethers here an’ thar.

When Sundy cum she hustled um on,
An’ traipsed erlong ter church,
Her mouf er grin frum year ter year,
Her face one gret big smirch.

She slipt out ’fore de ress ov us,
Dough she had werk ter do;
An’ got dar ’fore de preacher did—
And percht in de middle pew.

I had ter stay at home dat day
To do what she dun leff;
I owed her er grudge an’ she got it,
Er swingin’ frum de heff.

I wisht you'd seen her fling her hed
Wid dem fethers flyin' 'roun',
She nuvver lookt lower dan de skies,
An' hardly teched de groun'.

Den she cum twistin' in de house,
So proud she bar end speak,
Like dat wus de fus cloak uvver made,
Wid dat long greasy streak.

She marched up ter de lookin'-glass
Wid her hed tost in de ar;"
"I wisht you'd bin erlong wid me
An' seed dem darkies star!

Dey lookt, an' lookt, an' I felt fine—"
Den I larft twell I wus hurt,
"I ain't wund'rin' at dat starin', nun—
Whar you leff yer bottom skirt?"

Mammy's Recipe for Catchup.

"You fust take sum termottoses——"

"How many?" "Jess you choose,
About es many as you think
You need to want ter use.

An' slice an' stew um er long time,
Hit's pintedly werk, not fun;
Mine, stew um slow, as long's you think
Hit'll take ter be well done.

An' den you take some inguns,
Keep stewin' all erlong;
But don't put too many inguns in,
De ketchup be too strong.

Den er pinch uv cloves—an' spices,
Not nuff ter spile de looks,
An' don't you put um in too soon,
Dey darkens whiles dey cooks.

An' sum likes corimander seed,
But I don' holes by dat,
Ner po' man's flaver, cinnermun,
Hit makes hit tase too flat.

Not much uv all, and yit ernuff;
I fergot dem peppers, too;
You better put too much uv thum,
Den resk erbout too few."

"How much? How many?" "I carn't tell,
You puts in, an' dispense
Jess by yer sense ov feelins—
Ain't you got natchul sense?"

"By those rules—you call them rules?"
"In cose—an' sho' I do—"
"I think your 'ketch-up' recipe
Is certainly 'catch-up' too."

Mammy is mightly 'fended now;
"Well, ef you knows de bess,
Whyn't you make hit yer own seff,
An' leab me ter my ress."

The Kase.

“What you warnt here, little Miss?”

“Why, I’ve come to learn to cook;”

“Now you march straight back ter that thar
house,

An’ read yer pictur-book,

An’ tend ter white foke’s business,

Whar white fokes understans;

You got no business ’round dis fire

Er spiln’ dem white hands.

Yer granma’d rise up in her grave

To see are chile of hern

Er meddlin’ wid er butcher-knife,

Or projickin’ wid er churn.

An’ I jess mixin’ uv dis dough,

Two cakes ter make an’ bake,

An’ here you cum wid sun yer fun;

Don’ talk, fer pity’s sake,

Kase I got no time ter wase jess now,

An’ de kitchen ain’ no place

Fer dem dar shoes an’ ruffled dress,

Ner fer quality chillen’s face.

You got plenty ov fokes ter cook fer you
De ress of your born days ;”
“But why can’t I learn to cook myself ?”
“Kase,” argues Mammy, “Kase.”

So then fate’s fiat has gone forth,
The “ukase” of our Czar,
Like axioms of self-evident truths,
For Mammy’s “kase” is law.

“Miss” returns to her pleasant tasking
And resumes her picture-book ;
Now many a time she wrings her hands
That she didn’t learn to cook.

The Buzg Bee.

Mort was always good-natured and ready to
laugh,

In fact, he was generally grinning,
With his eyes and his teeth in boldest relief,
But droning's the worst of his sinning.

He can play a good tune and dance to its time,
And has a good voice for the singing;
His efforts stop there, for though advice is not
rare,
For a chorus is usually ringing.

Of "lazy" and "trifless" and "wuthless" and
such
Epithets must he daily be hearing;
But they make no sort of impression on Mort,
Though not for the want of good rearing.

His mother never let up on dinning it in,
His wife kept continually prodding;
It seemed like the bees buzzing on in the trees,
And oftentimes set him to nodding.

"You mus spec ter fine munny growin' 'pun
trees,

Kase you ain't nuvver earned yer own salt-in—"

"I nuvver seed no good in sech high-seasoned food,
Tain't me dat fine all dat faultin'."

"Don't yer know," plead his wife, "dat Satan look out

Fer ter keep idle hans all er werkin',
An' you know you is lazy an' shiffless an' slazy,
What you mean by interminal shirkin'?"

"Yes, I knows dat Satan induschnus ernuff,
Dat he wussern er bee er er hornit,
But yer fine yerseff losin' sum good time er-
busin',
Whiles you breaves in my years like er
cornit."

"I bleaves ef you had er whole fiel' ov wheat,
You wouldn't *busy* yerseff fer ter reap it—"
"Busy! Dat de onliest good quality de debble
am got,
An' I moves fer ter let de debble keep it."

Prudence.

I 'low she are de slighthenest one
Dat I did uver see,
An' when I tells you her lass trick,
I think you'll ergree wid me.

Miss hired her when her nuss wus sick,
An' busying wid dem all;
Jess erwaitin' at dat dippo,
When dey heerd de ingin squall.

"Now" ses Miss, "you takes dis chile
An' hole her by de han',
An' be reddy ter jump in arfter me,
When de cyars cum ter de stan'."

An' dat outdashus gal got in,
Wid er little light-hyared chile
Ere fitein' like de scratches,
An' lookin' skeered an' wile.

An' de ingine started off right straight,
An' Miss lookt at her face;
Ef you b'leaves, 'twas sum strange chile
Dat she'd jukked off de place.

Er chile dey nuvver seed befo',
An' 'Lisbuth leff beline,
Well, you reckon dey started telegrums
Explainin' 'bout deir mine.

Dey stopt at de fust place on de road,
An' had her exprust back;
An' finully got our 'Lizerbuth
Frum off de ingine track.

"An', lawsy me, why, tain't my fault,
I didn't knowed her name,
But I grabbed de bess one dat I seed,
An' I don' bar no blame.

"I thought," sed dat trifless nigger,
"Dat she wus er awful chile,
But I put up wid her fitein' ov me
Kase white fokes always spiled."

Fuss an' Duss.

Miss sho' do make er lot ov fuss
 'Bout keepin' ov things clean,
An' peekin' 'bout in cornders .
 Whar nuthin' kin be seen.

"Sweep here! Bresh dis! Duss thar!
 Now pick up all dem strings,"
An' who you reckon got de nerve
 Ter look arfter all dem things?

Now I don' pruve ov so much werk,
 Who reckon dirt gwine hurt;
Miss suttinly dun fergot de fac,
 Dat we alls made ov dirt.

Suttinly, we'uns made out dirt,
 An' terns ter dirt ergin;
An' yit Miss keep us wrasslin' 'round
 Like good clean dirt wus sin.

The Old Hen-Wife.

“Miss Rose, lemme hab yer hens ter raise,
I got de likeliest place,
Whar de grass am green, an’ er lively drain,
An’ de water jess runs ter waste;
My fowls, ef I do say it myseff,
Do hab de bestes tase.

I takes all de trubble offen yer hans,
An’ raise dem hens fer haff;
De mill ain’t fur, an’ dey picks up
Deir livin’ off offal an’ chaff;
I sho’ is lucky wid my hens—”
She ends with a jolly laugh.

So just to try, she gives her twelve
Of Cochin eggs to hatch,
After due time she makes her way
Down by P’lina’s patch.
(Now old P’lina’s smooth a one
The world may find to match.)

The chickens are of frying size,
P’lina’s face all smile,

“Now jess sit down an’ resse yerseff,
An’ look eroun’ erwhile;
Hit’s menny er day sense you bin heer—
Hits nigh erbout er mile.

You don’ say you walked dis fur
On dem leetle teensy feet?
I ’clar, Miss Rose, you sho’ looks young,
An’ dat dress sho’ is sweet!”
“We’ll talk about the chickens now—
They must be ready to eat.

How many of my dozen hatched?”
“De hen jess hatched out six—
An’ laws, Miss Rose, your six eggs spiled—
How white fokes does git mixt,
Jess six eggs hatched—an’ dem six dar
Is my harf ov de chicks.”

Manners.

"There goes old Aunt Mary now,
Run and catch her, please;
I want her to come some time next week
To help boil down that grease.

I want her for fifty other things—
Find out if she can come,
Or I'll have to look for some one else—
Now call her—you're not dumb."

Aunt Mary halts—"Now, you be sure
To tell her to come next week."
Aunt Mary's a regular character,
A Barnum Museum freak.

But she well knows how to do her work;
An invaluable aid
In times of great emergency,
If sure to be well paid.

Whatever you say, her eyes are skinned
To her own interest sure,
And if she is not paid enough—
She'll take it, even more.

They talk so long before the gate
My patience quite gives out,
So I saunter slowly down the lane
To see what they are about.

For nothing's happened that I know
In the county or the town,
To require elaborate gestures
And wavings up and down.

I hear in snatches as I walk:
"Aunt Polly's Susan Ann,"
And somebody's sister "'Melia"
And Aunt Mary's own "ole man."

I hear nothing at all about my soap,
Or any of my affairs,
And I must shift some of the burden
Of accumulating cares.

I break in on the list of friends,
Like the pibroch of old days,
The enumerations of Scotch clans
With their uncommon ways.

At last a pause: "Well, can you come?"
"Come? What for? And Whar?"
And how fer is I got ter walk?
An' when will I git thar?"

This is the form of mother-wit,
Of many of her kind;
I well know how she always talks,
So I needn't ever mind.

But I look in amazement at my maid,
Who doesn't offer to speak;
"Why! Hasn't Parthenia told you
I want you to work next week?"

"Parthenia! What is the matter with you?"
"I hadn't dun fergit,
But I hadn't jess finished axin'
'Bout all her kinfolkes yit."

The Traveled Monkey.

Ole Mills didn't hab no manner uv use
Fer Joe before he went,
Still less when he had cum back home,
Stuffed up with ars and scent.

You kno he nuvver had no sense,
Kase Jim wus sure pea-green;
No, I ain't talkin' 'bout ole Mills,
I darsen't—he too mean.

You dunno what you gwine ter ketch
When you meddles wid ole Mills;
Fokes say he's cunjur, watch yer mouf
'Bout uvvery werd it spills.

But Joe cum trippin' on his toes,
Er bowin' 'roun' wid smiles,
Usein' de biggest sort ov werds,
De shortess reach three miles.

Unc'l Mills batted ov his eyes,
One second 'twus forty winks,
An' drawed his mouf all in and out,
We knowed what ole Mills thinks.

Now here's er sample ov dat Joe:

“An' yer corpus segradiates well?”

“I'm pleased wid memorial news,”

“Quite an umbragial smell.”

We all wus feared to say one werd,

When Mills keep battin' his eyes;

Twell he says: “Is dis here Joseph's coat

On Mr. Sollermun Wise?

An' will sumbody please ter tell

What dis here gentlemun say,

Kase ef he means insults by dem,

He better track out my way.”

Sumbody tried to 'splain ter him

Dat what Joe meant ter say

Was sum kine ov er compliment,

But sed sum yether way.

An' Uncle Mills kepp on battin' his eyes,

An' wavin' ov dat han';

“Den Mister Wise must use de werds

Dat fokes kin understan'.”

When ole Mills bat bof hans an' eyes,

We got reesins ter know de cause;

He jess er eechin' for ter reech out

An' smack somebody's jaws.

Joe called back his 'membrances,
Kase Joe, he knowed it too,
An' de nex time he cum traipsin' in
He sed plain "Howdy-do."

Uncle Ajax.

Uncle Ajax has a curious way
Of muttering all the time;
Carrying a brisk talking on,
Half reason and half rhyme.

He works the garden in the Spring;
You hear his voice for hours;
Nobody there but the trees and weeds,
The grass, and the young Spring flowers.

Sometimes he goes on so fast
You'd think he had a double,
While the cadences go up and down,
As if Ajax was in trouble.

His thoughts fly off to far-off times,
The future, or the past,
The present hardships of his lot,
The length of time they last.

"Run," said I once to Mammy Kate,
As they swung from bass to treble;
"Laws, ehile, I darsent ventur, kase
Ajax talkin' ter de debble."

Lightwood.

“Why, Uncle Yorke!

And how do you do?”

“Tolerbul poorly, Miss Vi,

Arfter what I goes thru;

I dun got rheumatiz,

Ez you kin see—

Or ruther de rheumatiz

Dun got me.

An’ I ain’t gettin’ ’long

So well es I mought;

I got pleny ter eat,

But my wood gin out;

An’ I cum ter ax yer

Fer er tern

Of sum oak-knots

Dat’s fitten ter burn;

An’ I pays you back

Ef I libs tweli Spring,

An’ Spring mos’ here,

Ef de birds don’ sing.”

“If you’ll cut up

That tree by the fall,

And move it away,

You can have it all.”

“Laws, sholy! Miss Vi!
You don’t expec
Me ter tech are tree
Whar litenin’ strecks?
You won’t git are nigger
In dese lands,
Ter meddle wid litenin’
Wid his hands.
Dat tree will stan’
While de werl muve ’roun’,
Ef you waits fer me
Ter cut it down.
I’d friz ter deff
’Fore I toch are limb,
When litenin’ strecks
It b’longs ter Him.

You be totin’ bad luck
Ercrost yer floor
When you totes dat wood
Insiden yer do’.
An’ you don’ know—?
Whar you bin raise?
Dat ter burn dat wood
Will shorten yer days?
You moughtn’t b’leave
What de witches sed,
But dat be too late
When Yorke be ded.

Well, I sho' am bleege—
 Good-by, Miss Vi,
I fotch yer dat litewood
 'Fore I die.
But ef you wants
 Ter lose yer breff,
You try dat ded wood
 By yerseff."

The Ounce of Prevention.

No darkey ever acknowledged good health,
He was always "Poorly, thank God!"
You'd think his back was bent or broke
By submission to the rod.

"Bress God! He'd a mizry in his hade,"
Or rheumatiz in his knees;
But everything--ailments, good or bad,
Was plastered by that "Please."

If you'd ask what really was the cause
Of making such a fuss,
"Dar ain't nuthin' 'tickler de matter terday--
But I'm feared of gittin' wuss."

The Old-Time Gourd.

You kin talk erbout yer silber cups,
An' tankards wid de ale,
An' er thursty man upon er pinch
Kin tilt de water-pail;
Out in de fiels yer own two hans
An unsartin sup kin 'ford;
But you duuno how water ought ter tase
Lessen you drinks frum de gourd.

De white fokes drinks out menmy things,
Jess 'cordin' how dey raise,
Coke-nut dippers, tumblers, mugs,
An' menmy yether ways;
But fur de rale pleasure,
An' de water jess bin poured,
Fer satersfaction all eroun',
Gimme er drink frum de gourd.

De gourd wus made fer niggers,
Jess growin' 'long de groun',
Takin' life easy in de mine
An' lazin' all eroun'.

Go down ter dat spring in de hollow,
Whar de summer coolness stored,
An' foteh dat bucket drippin' back
An' gimme er drink frum de gourd.

Little Hot-Hooks.

The guns had opened a steady fire,
The grass with blood was wet;
When a negro baby toddled up
Along the parapet.

Composed and calm as the sky above
He walked serenely through
The shot and shell of the belching guns
With the fire and smoke in view.

Black as the ace of spades was he,
With one white garment on;
That scantily covered the little limbs,
And that was tattered and worn.

A flag of truce—for both sides stopped—
It created quite a stir—
“I jess cumed up hyar fer ter see
What all dis noise is fer.

I warnts ter see de ginrul Boss
What owns all dese here guns;”
A hand reached up and dragged him down
While a shout of laughter runs

All through the startled camping-grounds.

“Now, Sambo, what’s your will?”

“I wisht, Mr. Ginrul, dat you’d make

All dese here guus keep still.

Mammy put me in my cradle,

An’ rockt me a whole heep;

But I dun tole her twarnt no use,

Kase I carn’t go ter sleep

Wid all dis racket ’roun’ me;

An’ ef you’ll be so good—

I wisht you’d stop it, Mister—”

And “Mister” wished he could.

Jacob's Ladder.

Uncle Jake lived up in de loft,
In de cabin ov his niece,
Kase he sed dat wuz de onliest place
He cud find enny peace.

Un uvvery time when he cum down
Dat larther, day by day,
He sot it up erginst de wall
Ter keep it out de way.

De werd were kerried 'roun' erbout
Dat he were moughty rich;
All his rullations kep deirselves
Chuned up ter concert pitch.

An', by an' by, he cum ter die,
Dey all wuz getherin' 'roun',
An' Uncle Jake he stretched his eyes
Like he wake frum er swound.

"I leabes ter Sue an' chillen
My ole black stockin'-fut;
Hit's in de bottom ov de chist—
Leasways, dar's whar 'twas put."

An' den his eyes kep wundering—

An' his voice grow moughty soff—

“Yes, angels, set dat larther up—

I'm gwine inter yer loft.”

Uncle Worke's Indians.

Yes, I knowed all 'bout Injuns;
I knowed um fust an' last,
An' you young fokes may thank your stars
Dat Injun-time dun past.

I seed um cum, an' I seed um go,
Wid deir tomashawks an' paint,
An' de likeliest Injun dat I seed
Was fur frum bein' er saint.

'Twarnt no fun, now I tells yer,
Ter heer dem Injuns yell,
An' fly erbout wid tomashawks
Ter roast yer shins er spell.
I tells yer now 'twus somethin' fierce
Ter see dem Injuns dance,
An' sculp de top ov yer only hed ,
Whenuvver dey got er chance.

De onliest good Injun is er dead one, sho',
I heerd sumbody sed;
Ef Miss Pocahontus wus er good Injun,
Well, ain't Miss Poky ded ?

An' she bin ded er good long time,
Mos' fokes is dun forgit,
But Injuns is—Injuns—an' I kno
Her kin-fokes livin' yit.

Miss Darling.

Graduated—and with a head choke full,
Of all new-fangled germs,
Her language spiced with college slang
And scientific terms.

Elected to teach, because she knows
So much beyond a doubt;
Feels vastly superior to the race
That dwell around about.

She reads a tome of ponderous size,
And toasts her feet at the fire,
Sub-conscious of the wisdom
That others should admire.

When old Belinda's turbaned head
Is popped inside the door—
“Well, Miss Darling, I sho' is glad
You here fer sartin' sho'.”

Passes the compliments of the day,
With futurity of hope;
Then asks if she knows “when the moon will
wax
Ter make er bilin' ov soap.”

Miss Darling stares, as well she might,
With nothing at all to say,
For what does she know about waxing,
And bilings are not her way.

She thinks Belinda out of her mind,
Mixing up soap and moon,
And devoutly wishes one might come
To relieve the stress, and soon.

Belinda laughs at her vacant stare,
“Laws! ehile, I jess cum ter ax
When the moon kin change—ter bile the soap
Frum out de alminax?

Or kin you tell me when de new moon
Will be upon de crease?
Kase I should be loth ter spile
All dat dar mutton grease.

I dun save er lot of good white fat,
An’ hate ter see it wase;
Ef de moon beent right—” and laughs again
At Miss Darling’s puzzled face.

“Don’t you know fokes don’ bile no soap
When de moon am on de wane;
Hit’ll all dry up, an’ won’t make suds,
An’ de trubble all be vain?”

Miss Darling vaguely remembers,
 "Hitch your wagon to a star."
But it doesn't seem to fit right in,
 Or the wagon seems to jar.

"No," she answers coldly,
 "I know nothing of that kind—"
And feels the weighty significance
 Of an educated mind.

Belinda turns in silent scorn,
 With an insulted air,
And settles her opinion
 Of Miss Darling then and there.

"Laws! calling herseff uv er teacher,"
 She grunts when out of range;
"An' carn't even tell er poor nigger
 When the moon gwine change."

Speeding the Parting.

"Ole Marster called we darkeys up
Frum de plantation grounds,
De yard wus black with bobbin' heads
Fur suvral yards eroun'.

"Now," ses ole Marser, "youse all free,"
An' er tear wus in his eye;
"You dun dun yer duty all by me,
An' I wants ter say good-by.

I wish you well, my lifetime friends,
We've wintered many years,"
De ress dat he wus gwine ter say
Was swallowed up wid tears.

Ole Marster stood in silence, den
And waved ter all his han';
Den Dinks stept up an' made er bow,
"Does we alls understand

Dat we is free ter go—er stay?
Jess as we please an' choose;
An' muss we go, or kin we stay?
Dis here's confugin news.

Kase I ain't got nowhars ter go,
My wife an' chillen's ded,
An' out in dat same buryin'-ground
I hopes ter lay dis hed.

An' ef it's all de same ter you,
I stays right on right here,
An' goes an' plows dat same low grounds
I dun plowed forty year."

Den Chloe said: "How 'bout dat chile?
Is she gwine 'long wid me?
Is you gwine make her papers out
An' say we bofe is free?

What I gwine say ter Mistis,
Up 'mongst dem heavenly palms,
When she ax me 'bout dat dar chile
She leff in dese two arms?

You know she call ter me dat night,
Upon dat dyin' bed,
An' I promist on my bended knees,
An' dese de werds I said:

I calls de Lord ter witness,
Wid dat chile upon my bress,
Ter see dat I tuk keer ov her,
Den Mistis went ter ress.

I gwine ter luk Miss in de face,
An' straight betwixt de eye,
I dun tuk keer of dat po' chile
Twell I were called on high.

An' dough she almoss big ernuff
Ter take keer of herseff,
Miss 'specs me ter look arfter her
Untwell my dyin' breff.

Ef Missy earn't go 'long wid me,
I stays here twell I dies;"
An' uvvery darkey standin' dar
Had tears in bof' his eyes.

But sum dem young an' trifless ones
'Pon what no reed depends,
Dey squanderd off all which-er-ways,
But we uns parted frens.

"An' whar wus I? An' whar'd I go?
Ax what ole Marster thinks;
I thought I had dun 'splained myseff
Dat my name wus ole Dinks."

The Hegira.

For at least six months after the war,
The darkeys staid at home,
Then began a great migration,
They said "De werd dun cum."

"What word? From whom? From where?"
But that was all they said,
And further explanation
Was never ever made.

For whatever thoughts roll inside
Beneath those crinkled hairs,
You'll never know—that secret gift,
Silence—is surely theirs.

But in spite of all persuasion
Some staid where they were born,
Even suffered persecution—
Held by their race in scorn.

They worked on till their dying day,
And knew no other place,
Some faithful hearts were staunch and true,
Even of a treacherous race.

Ever and anon some notice reads,
 "Passed—from the dark to light,"
"Our Mammy" or "Old Uncle Jake—"
 "Black, but the soul was white."

Et Aprés.

Think of the little ones now-a-days
Born to untoward fate,
Who never will hear a slumber-song
With Mammies out of date.

No comforting for childish woes,
No kiss to ease a pain,
If they look to hireling nurses,
They look, alas! in vain.

Her only thought of precious charge
Her wages by the week;
But otherwise a nuisance,
If her inmost soul could speak.

We ought to give the children
Of love a ten-fold store,
When the Mammies of the South are gone—
And gone forever more.

The Problems of the Day.

Dey talks erbout de problumses
Of dese here curis times,
An' how de puzzle werries um,
Wid de multiflyin' crimes.

An' wonders, wonders how dey cums,
An' what dey's gwine ter do,
An' how cum dis, an' how goes dat,
An' what's er cumin' true.

An' er poor ole nigger jess like me,
Black es de midnight's face,
Kin gin dem easy answers fer
All dis here cumin' race.

Dey jess needs good ole 'ligion,
De good ole-fashuned kine,
An' take de hoe an' go ter werk,
Dat'll easy up de mine.

Dey ain't no puzzle ter be 'splain,
Dat answer dun cum true,
Laws! Dese here problums ole es time,
Hit's jess de people's new.

Dat's all—dat's faif, an' common-sense,
Don' werry 'bout no more;
Ole-time 'ligion bar you up,
An' lan' you on dat shore.

Dat yether shore, dat shining shore,
Whar dar nuvver is no night,
Whar poor fokes walks upon de gold,
An' black fokes same as white.

Dixie's Land.

These little picaninnies
That scramble on the fence,
Are lively living pictures
That appeal to Southern sense.

With all their grins of merriment
No sorrow serves to stem;
But this race is disappearing fast,
So make the most of them.



Old times dar am not for-got-ten!

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